AUTUMN JOURNAL

by the same author

THE EARTH COMPELS

OUT OF THE PICTURE

POEMS

AUTUMN JOURNAL

a poem by

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NOTE

I am aware that there are over-statements in this poem—e.g. in the passages dealing with Ireland, the Oxford by-election or my own more private existence. There are also inconsistencies. If I had been writing a didactic poem proper, it would have been my job to qualify or eliminate these overstatements and inconsistencies. But I was writing what I have called a Journal. In a journal or a personal letter a man writes what he feels at the moment; to attempt scientific truthfulness would be—paradoxically—dishonest. The truth of a lyric is different from the truths of science and this poem is something half-way between the lyric and the didactic poem. In as much as it is half-way towards a didactic poem I trust that it contains some 'criticism of life' or implies some standards which are not merely personal. I was writing it from August 1938 until the New Year and have not altered any passages relating to public events in the light of what happened after the time of writing. Thus the section about Barcelona having been written before the fall of Barcelona, I should consider it dishonest to have qualified it retrospectively by my reactions to the later event. Nor am I attempting to offer what so many people now demand from poets—a final verdict or a balanced judgment. It is the nature of

this poem to be neither final nor balanced. I have certain beliefs which, I hope, emerge in the course of it but which I have refused to abstract from their context. For this reason I shall probably be called a trimmer by some and a sentimental extremist by others. But poetry in my opinion must be honest before anything else and I refuse to be 'objective' or clear-cut at the cost of honesty.

L. M.

March, 1939.

AUTUMN JOURNAL

i

Close and slow, summer is ending in Hampshire,
 Ebbing away down ramps of shaven lawn where close-clipped yew
Insulates the lives of retired generals and admirals
 And the spyglasses hung in the hall and the prayer-books ready in the pew
And August going out to the tin trumpets of nasturtiums
 And the sunflowers' Salvation Army blare of brass
And the spinster sitting in a deck-chair picking up stitches
 Not raising her eyes to the noise of the 'planes that pass
Northward from Lee-on-Solent. Macrocarpa and cypress
 And roses on a rustic trellis and mulberry trees
And bacon and eggs in a silver dish for breakfast
 And all the inherited assets of bodily ease
And all the inherited worries, rheumatism and taxes,
 And whether Stella will marry and what to do with Dick

And the branch of the family that lost their money in Hatry
And the passing of the *Morning Post* and of life's
climacteric
And the growth of vulgarity, cars that pass the gate-lodge
And crowds undressing on the beach
And the hiking cockney lovers with thoughts directed
Neither to God nor Nation but each to each.
But the home is still a sanctum under the pelmets,
All quiet on the Family Front,
Farmyard noises across the fields at evening
While the trucks of the Southern Railway dawdle . . .
shunt
Into poppy sidings for the night—night which knows no
passion
No assault of hands or tongue
For all is old as flint or chalk or pine-needles
And the rebels and the young
Have taken the train to town or the two-seater
Unravelling rails or road,
Losing the thread deliberately behind them—
Autumnal palinode.
And I am in the train too now and summer is going
South as I go north
Bound for the dead leaves falling, the burning bonfire,
The dying that brings forth
The harder life, revealing the trees' girders,
The frost that kills the germs of *laissez-faire*;
West Meon, Tisted, Farnham, Woking, Weybridge,
Then London's packed and stale and pregnant air.
My dog, a symbol of the abandoned order,
Lies on the carriage floor,
Her eyes inept and glamorous as a film star's,
Who wants to live, i.e. wants more

Presents, jewellery, furs, gadgets, solicitations
As if to live were not
Following the curve of a planet or controlled water
But a leap in the dark, a tangent, a stray shot.
It is this we learn after so many failures,
The building of castles in sand, of queens in snow,
That we cannot make any corner in life or in life's beauty,
That no river is a river which does not flow.
Surbiton, and a woman gets in, painted
With dyed hair but a ladder in her stocking and eyes
Patient beneath the calculated lashes,
Inured for ever to surprise;
And the train's rhythm becomes the *ad nauseam* repetition
Of every tired aubade and maudlin madrigal,
The faded airs of sexual attraction
Wandering like dead leaves along a warehouse wall:
'I loved my love with a platform ticket,
A jazz song,
A handbag, a pair of stockings of Paris Sand—
I loved her long.
I loved her between the lines and against the clock,
Not until death
But till life did us part I loved her with paper money
And with whisky on the breath.
I loved her with peacock's eyes and the wares of Carthage,
With glass and gloves and gold and a powder puff
With blasphemy, camaraderie, and bravado
And lots of other stuff.
I loved my love with the wings of angels
Dipped in henna, unearthly red,

With my office hours, with flowers and sirens,
With my budget, my latchkey, and my daily bread.'
And so to London and down the ever-moving
Stairs
Where a warm wind blows the bodies of men together
And blows apart their complexes and cares.

ii

Spider, spider, twisting tight—
 But the watch is wary beneath the pillow—
I am afraid in the web of night
 When the window is fingered by the shadows of
 branches,
When the lions roar beneath the hill
 And the meter clicks and the cistern bubbles
And the gods are absent and the men are still—
 Noli me tangere, my soul is forfeit.
Some now are happy in the hive of home,
 Thigh over thigh and a light in the night nursery,
And some are hungry under the starry dome
 And some sit turning handles.
Glory to God in the Lowest, peace beneath the earth,
 Dumb and deaf at the nadir;
I wonder now whether anything is worth
 The eyelid opening and the mind recalling.
And I think of Persephone gone down to dark,
 No more a virgin, gone the garish meadow,
But why must she come back, why must the snowdrop
 mark
 That life goes on for ever?

There are nights when I am lonely and long for love
 But to-night is quintessential dark forbidding
Anyone beside or below me; only above
 Pile high the tumulus, good-bye to starlight.
Good-bye the Platonic sieve of the Carnal Man
 But good-bye also Plato's philosophising;
I have a better plan
 To hit the target straight without circumlocution.
If you can equate Being in its purest form
 With denial of all appearance,
Then let me disappear—the scent grows warm
 For pure Not-Being, Nirvana.
Only the spider spinning out his reams
 Of colourless thread says Only there are always
Interlopers, dreams,
 Who let no dead dog lie nor death be final;
Suggesting, while he spins, that to-morrow will out-
 weigh
 To-night, that Becoming is a match for Being,
That to-morrow is also a day,
 That I must leave my bed and face the music.
As all the others do who with a grin
 Shake off sleep like a dog and hurry to desk or engine
And the fear of life goes out as they clock in
 And history is reasserted.
Spider, spider, your irony is true;
 Who am I—or I—to demand oblivion?
I must go out to-morrow as the others do
 And build the falling castle;
Which has never fallen, thanks
 Not to any formula, red tape or institution,
Not to any creeds or banks,
 But to the human animal's endless courage.

Spider, spider, spin
 Your register and let me sleep a little,
Not now in order to end but to begin
 The task begun so often.

iii

August is nearly over, the people
Back from holiday are tanned
With blistered thumbs and a wallet of snaps and a little
Joie de vivre which is contraband;
Whose stamina is enough to face the annual
Wait for the annual spree,
Whose memories are stamped with specks of sunshine
Like faded *fleurs de lys.*
Now the till and the typewriter call the fingers,
The workman gathers his tools
For the eight-hour day but after that the solace
Of films or football pools
Or of the gossip or cuddle, the moments of self-glory
Or self-indulgence, blinkers on the eyes of doubt,
The blue smoke rising and the brown lace sinking
In the empty glass of stout.
Most are accepters, born and bred to harness,
And take things as they come,
But some refusing harness and more who are refused it
Would pray that another and a better Kingdom
come,
Which now is sketched in the air or travestied in slogans
Written in chalk or tar on stucco or plaster-board

But in time may find its body in men's bodies,
Its law and order in their heart's accord,
Where skill will no longer languish nor energy be trammelled
To competition and graft,
Exploited in subservience but not allegiance
To an utterly lost and daft
System that gives a few at fancy prices
Their fancy lives
While ninety-nine in the hundred who never attend the banquet
Must wash the grease of ages off the knives.
And now the tempter whispers 'But you also
Have the slave-owner's mind,
Would like to sleep on a mattress of easy profits,
To snap your fingers or a whip and find
Servants or houris ready to wince and flatter
And build with their degradation your self-esteem;
What you want is not a world of the free in function
But a niche at the top, the skimmings of the cream.'
And I answer that that is largely so for habit makes me
Think victory for one implies another's defeat,
That freedom means the power to order, and that in order
To preserve the values dear to the élite
The élite must remain a few. It is so hard to imagine
A world where the many would have their chance without
A fall in the standard of intellectual living
And nothing left that the highbrow cared about.
Which fears must be suppressed. There is no reason for thinking
That, if you give a chance to people to think or live,

The arts of thought or life will suffer and become rougher
And not return more than you could ever give.
And now I relapse to sleep, to dreams perhaps and reaction
Where I shall play the gangster or the sheikh,
Kill for the love of killing, make the world my sofa,
Unzip the women and insult the meek.
Which fantasies no doubt are due to my private history,
Matter for the analyst,
But the final cure is not in his past-dissecting fingers
But in a future of action, the will and fist
Of those who abjure the luxury of self-pity,
And prefer to risk a movement without being sure
If movement would be better or worse in a hundred
Years or a thousand when their heart is pure.
None of our hearts are pure, we always have mixed motives,
Are self deceivers, but the worst of all
Deceits is to murmur 'Lord, I am not worthy'
And, lying easy, turn your face to the wall.
But may I cure that habit, look up and outwards
And may my feet follow my wider glance
First no doubt to stumble, then to walk with the others
And in the end—with time and luck—to dance.

iv

September has come and I wake
And I think with joy how whatever, now or in future,
the system
Nothing whatever can take
The people away, there will always be people
For friends or for lovers though perhaps
The conditions of love will be changed and its vices
diminished
And affection not lapse
To narrow possessiveness, jealousy founded on vanity.
September has come, it is *hers*
Whose vitality leaps in the autumn,
Whose nature prefers
Trees without leaves and a fire in the fire-place;
So I give her this month and the next
Though the whole of my year should be hers who has
rendered already
So many of its days intolerable or perplexed
But so many more so happy;
Who has left a scent on my life and left my walls
Dancing over and over with her shadow,
Whose hair is twined in all my waterfalls
And all of London littered with remembered kisses.

So I am glad
That life contains her with her moods and moments
More shifting and more transient than I had
Yet thought of as being integral to beauty;
Whose mind is like the wind on a sea of wheat,
Whose eyes are candour,
And assurance in her feet
Like a homing pigeon never by doubt diverted.
To whom I send my thanks
That the air has become shot silk, the streets are
music,
And that the ranks
Of men are ranks of men, no more of cyphers.
So that if now alone
I must pursue this life, it will not be only
A drag from numbered stone to numbered stone
But a ladder of angels, river turning tidal.
Offhand, at times hysterical, abrupt,
You are one I always shall remember,
Whom cant can never corrupt
Nor argument disinherit.
Frivolous, always in a hurry, forgetting the address,
Frowning too often, taking enormous notice
Of hats and backchat—how could I assess
The thing that makes you different?
You whom I remember glad or tired,
Smiling in drink or scintillating anger,
Inopportunely desired
On boats, on trains, on roads when walking.
Sometimes untidy, often elegant,
So easily hurt, so readily responsive,
To whom a trifle could be an irritant
Or could be balm and manna.

Whose words would tumble over each other and pelt
From pure excitement,
Whose fingers curl and melt
When you were friendly.
I shall remember you in bed with bright
Eyes or in a café stirring coffee
Abstractedly and on your plate the white
Smoking stub your lips had touched with crimson.
And I shall remember how your words could hurt
Because they were so honest
And even your lies were able to assert
Integrity of purpose.
And it is on the strength of knowing you
I reckon generous feeling more important
Than the mere deliberating what to do
When neither the pros nor cons affect the pulses.
And though I have suffered from your special strength
Who never flatter for points nor fake responses,
I should be proud if I could evolve at length
An equal thrust and pattern.

V

To-day was a beautiful day, the sky was a brilliant
Blue for the first time for weeks and weeks
But posters flapping on the railings tell the fluttered
World that Hitler speaks, that Hitler speaks
And we cannot take it in and we go to our daily
Jobs to the dull refrain of the caption 'War'
Buzzing around us as from hidden insects
And we think 'This must be wrong, it has happened before,
Just like this before, we must be dreaming;
It was long ago these flies
Buzzed like this, so why are they still bombarding
The ears if not the eyes?'
And we laugh it off and go round town in the evening
And this, we say, is on me;
Something out of the usual, a Pimm's Number One, a Picon—
But did you see
The latest? You mean whether Cobb has bust the record
Or do you mean the Australians have lost their last by ten
Wickets or do you mean that the autumn fashions—
No, we don't mean anything like that again.

No, what we mean is Hodza, Henlein, Hitler,
The Maginot Line,
The heavy panic that cramps the lungs and presses
The collar down the spine.
And when we go out into Piccadilly Circus
They are selling and buying the late
Special editions snatched and read abruptly
Beneath the electric signs as crude as Fate.
And the individual, powerless, has to exert the
Powers of will and choice
And choose between enormous evils, either
Of which depends on somebody else's voice.
The cylinders are racing in the presses,
The mines are laid,
The ribbon plumbs the fallen fathoms of Wall Street,
And you and I are afraid.
To-day they were building in Oxford Street, the
mortar
Pleasant to smell,
But now it seems futility, imbecility,
To be building shops when nobody can tell
What will happen next. What will happen
We ask and waste the question on the air;
Nelson is stone and Johnnie Walker moves his
Legs like a cretin over Trafalgar Square.
And in the Corner House the carpet-sweepers
Advance between the tables after crumbs
Inexorably, like a tank battalion
In answer to the drums.
In Tottenham Court Road the tarts and negroes
Loiter beneath the lights
And the breeze gets colder as on so many other
September nights.

A smell of French bread in Charlotte Street, a rustle
Of leaves in Regent's Park
And suddenly from the Zoo I hear a sea-lion
Confidently bark.
And so to my flat with the trees outside the window
And the dahlia shapes of the lights on Primrose Hill
Whose summit once was used for a gun emplacement
And very likely will
Be used that way again. The bloody frontier
Converges on our beds
Like jungle beaters closing in on their destined
Trophy of pelts and heads.
And at this hour of the day it is no good saying
'Take away this cup';
Having helped to fill it ourselves it is only logic
That now we should drink it up.
Nor can we hide our heads in the sands, the sands have
Filtered away;
Nothing remains but rock at this hour, this zero
Hour of the day.
Or that is how it seems to me as I listen
To a hooter call at six
And then a woodpigeon calls and stops but the wind
continues
Playing its dirge in the trees, playing its tricks.
And now the dairy cart comes clopping slowly—
Milk at the doors—
And factory workers are on their way to factories
And charwomen to chores.
And I notice feathers sprouting from the rotted
Silk of my black
Double eiderdown which was a wedding
Present eight years back.

And the linen which I lie on came from Ireland
In the easy days
When all I thought of was affection and comfort,
Petting and praise.
And now the woodpigeon starts again denying
The values of the town
And a car having crossed the hill accelerates, changes
Up, having just changed down.
And a train begins to chug and I wonder what the
morning
Paper will say,
And decide to go quickly to sleep for the morning already
Is with us, the day is to-day.

VI

And I remember Spain
 At Easter ripe as an egg for revolt and ruin
Though for a tripper the rain
 Was worse than the surly or the worried or the
 haunted faces
With writings on the walls—
 Hammer and sickle, Boicot, Viva, Muerra;
With café-au-lait brimming the waterfalls,
 With sherry, shellfish, omelettes.
With fretted stone the Moor
 Had chiselled for effects of sun and shadow;
With shadows of the poor,
 The begging cripples and the children begging.
The churches full of saints
 Tortured on racks of marble—
The old complaints
 Covered with gilt and dimly lit with candles.
With powerful or banal
 Monuments of riches or repression
And the Escorial
 Cold for ever within like the heart of Philip.
With ranks of dominoes
 Deployed on café tables the whole of Sunday;

With cabarets that call the tourist, shows
Of thighs and eyes and nipples.
With slovenly soldiers, nuns,
And peeling posters from the last elections
Promising bread or guns
Or an amnesty or another
Order or else the old
Glory veneered and varnished
As if veneer could hold
The rotten guts and crumbled bones together.
And a vulture hung in air
Below the cliffs of Ronda and below him
His hook-winged shadow wavered like despair
Across the chequered vineyards.
And the boot-blacks in Madrid
Kept us half an hour with polish and pincers
And all we did
In that city was drink and think and loiter.
And in the Prado half—
wit princes looked from the canvas they had paid for
(Goya had the laugh—
But can what is corrupt be cured by laughter?)
And the day at Aranjuez
When the sun came out for once on the yellow
river
With Valdepeñas burdening the breath
We slept a royal sleep in the royal gardens;
And at Toledo walked
Around the ramparts where they throw the garbage
And glibly talked
Of how the Spaniards lack all sense of business.
And Avila was cold
And Segovia was picturesque and smelly

And a goat on the road seemed old
 As the rocks or the Roman arches.
And Easter was wet and full
 In Seville and in the ring on Easter Sunday
A clumsy bull and then a clumsy bull
 Nodding his banderillas died of boredom.
And the standard of living was low
 But that, we thought to ourselves, was not our
 business;
All that the tripper wants is the *status quo*
 Cut and dried for trippers.
And we thought the papers a lark
 With their party politics and blank invective;
And we thought the dark
 Women who dyed their hair should have it dyed more
 often.
And we sat in trains all night
 With the windows shut among civil guards and
 peasants
And tried to play piquet by a tiny light
 And tried to sleep bolt upright;
And cursed the Spanish rain
 And cursed their cigarettes which came to pieces
And caught heavy colds in Cordova and in vain
 Waited for the right light for taking photos.
And we met a Cambridge don who said with an air
 'There's going to be trouble shortly in this country,'
And ordered anis, pudgy and debonair,
 Glad to show off his mastery of the language.
But only an inch behind
 This map of olive and ilex, this painted hoarding,
Careless of visitors the people's mind
 Was tunnelling like a mole to day and danger.

And the day before we left
We saw the mob in flower at Algeciras
Outside a toothless door, a church bereft
Of its images and its aura.
And at La Linea while
The night put miles between us and Gibraltar
We heard the blood-lust of a drunkard pile
His heaven high with curses;
And next day took the boat
For home, forgetting Spain, not realising
That Spain would soon denote
Our grief, our aspirations;
Not knowing that our blunt
Ideals would find their whetstone, that our spirit
Would find its frontier on the Spanish front,
Its body in a rag-tag army.

vii

Conferences, adjournments, ultimatums,
Flights in the air, castles in the air,
The autopsy of treaties, dynamite under the bridges,
The end of *laissez faire.*
After the warm days the rain comes pimpling
The paving stones with white
And with the rain the national conscience, creeping,
Seeping through the night.
And in the sodden park on Sunday protest
Meetings assemble not, as so often, now
Merely to advertise some patent panacea
But simply to avow
The need to hold the ditch; a bare avowal
That may perhaps imply
Death at the doors in a week but perhaps in the long run
Exposure of the lie.
Think of a number, double it, treble it, square it,
And sponge it out
And repeat *ad lib.* and mark the slate with crosses;
There is no time to doubt
If the puzzle really has an answer. Hitler yells on the wireless,
The night is damp and still

And I hear dull blows on wood outside my window;
They are cutting down the trees on Primrose Hill.
The wood is white like the roast flesh of chicken,
Each tree falling like a closing fan;
No more looking at the view from seats beneath the branches,
Everything is going to plan;
They want the crest of this hill for anti-aircraft,
The guns will take the view
And searchlights probe the heavens for bacilli
With narrow wands of blue.
And the rain came on as I watched the territorials
Sawing and chopping and pulling on ropes like a team
In a village tug-of-war; and I found my dog had vanished
And thought 'This is the end of the old régime,'
But found the police had got her at St. John's Wood station
And fetched her in the rain and went for a cup
Of coffee to an all-night shelter and heard a taxi-driver
Say 'It turns me up
When I see these soldiers in lorries'—rumble of tumbrils
Drums in the trees
Breaking the eardrums of the ravished dryads—
It turns me up; a coffee, please.
And as I go out I see a windscreen-wiper
In an empty car
Wiping away like mad and I feel astounded
That things have gone so far.
And I come back here to my flat and wonder whether
From now on I need take
The trouble to go out choosing stuff for curtains
As I don't know anyone to make
Curtains quickly. Rather one should quickly
Stop the cracks for gas or dig a trench

And take one's paltry measures against the coming
Of the unknown Uebermensch.
But one—meaning I—is bored, am bored, the issue
Involving principle but bound in fact
To squander principle in panic and self-deception—
Accessories after the act,
So that all we foresee is rivers in spate sprouting
With drowning hands
And men like dead frogs floating till the rivers
Lose themselves in the sands.
And we who have been brought up to think of 'Gallant
Belgium'
As so much blague
Are now preparing again to essay good through evil
For the sake of Prague;
And must, we suppose, become uncritical, vindictive,
And must, in order to beat
The enemy, model ourselves upon the enemy,
A howling radio for our paraclete.
The night continues wet, the axe keeps falling,
The hill grows bald and bleak
No longer one of the sights of London but maybe
We shall have fireworks here by this day week.

viii

Sun shines easy, sun shines gay
On bug-house, warehouse, brewery, market,
On the chocolate factory and the B.S.A.,
On the Greek town hall and Josiah Mason;
On the Mitchells and Butlers Tudor pubs,
On the white police and the one-way traffic
And glances off the chromium hubs
And the metal studs in the sleek macadam.
Eight years back about this time
I came to live in this hazy city
To work in a building caked with grime
Teaching the classics to Midland students;
Virgil, Livy, the usual round,
Principal parts and the lost digamma;
And to hear the prison-like lecture room resound
To Homer in a Dudley accent.
But Life was comfortable, life was fine
With two in a bed and patchwork cushions
And checks and tassels on the washing-line,
A gramophone, a cat, and the smell of jasmine.
The steaks were tender, the films were fun,
The walls were striped like a Russian ballet,

There were lots of things undone
 But nobody cared, for the days were early.
Nobody niggled, nobody cared,
 The soul was deaf to the mounting debit,
The soul was unprepared
 But the firelight danced on the ply-wood ceiling.
We drove round Shropshire in a bijou car—
 Bewdley, Cleobury Mortimer, Ludlow—
And the map of England was a toy bazaar
 And the telephone wires were idle music.
And sun shone easy, sun shone hard
 On quickly dropping pear-tree blossom
And pigeons courting in the cobbled yard
 With flashing necks and notes of thunder.
We slept in linen, we cooked with wine,
 We paid in cash and took no notice
Of how the train ran down the line
 Into the sun against the signal.
We lived in Birmingham through the slump—
 Line your boots with a piece of paper—
Sunlight dancing on the rubbish dump,
 On the queues of men and the hungry chimneys.
And the next election came—
 Labour defeats in Erdington and Aston;
And life went on—for us went on the same;
 Who were we to count the losses?
Some went back to work and the void
 Took on shape while others climbing
The uphill nights of the unemployed
 Woke in the morning to factory hooters.
Little on the plate and nothing in the post;
 Queue in the rain or try the public

Library where the eye may coast
Columns of print for a hopeful harbour.
But roads ran easy, roads ran gay
Clear of the city and we together
Could put on tweeds for a getaway
South or west to Clee or the Cotswolds;
Forty to the gallon; into the green
Fields in the past of English history;
Flies in the bonnet and dust on the screen
And no look back to the burning city.
That was then and now is now,
Here again on a passing visit,
Passing through but how
Memory blocks the passage.
Just as in 1931
Sun shines easy but I no longer
Docket a place in the sun—
No wife, no ivory tower, no funk-hole.
The night grows purple, the crisis hangs
Over the roofs like a Persian army
And all of Xenophon's parasangs
Would take us only an inch from danger.
Black-out practice and A.R.P.,
Newsboys driving a roaring business,
The flapping paper snatched to see
If anything has, or has not, happened.
And I go to the Birmingham Hippodrome
Packed to the roof and primed for laughter
And beautifully at home
With the ukulele and the comic chestnuts;
'As pals we meet, as pals we part'—
Embonpoint and a new tiara;

The comedian spilling the apple-cart
Of doubles entendres and doggerel verses
And the next day begins
Again with alarm and anxious
Listening to bulletins
From distant, measured voices
Arguing for peace
While the zero hour approaches,
While the eagles gather and the petrol and oil and grease
Have all been applied and the vultures back the eagles.
But once again
The crisis is put off and things look better
And we feel negotiation is not vain—
Save my skin and damn my conscience.
And negotiation wins,
If you can call it winning,
And here we are—just as before—safe in our skins;
Glory to God for Munich.
And stocks go up and wrecks
Are salved and politicians' reputations
Go up like Jack-on-the-Beanstalk; only the Czechs
Go down and without fighting.

ix

Now we are back to normal, now the mind is
Back to the even tenor of the usual day
Skidding no longer across the uneasy camber
Of the nightmare way.
We are safe though others have crashed the railings
Over the river ravine; their wheel-tracks carve the
bank
But after the event all we can do is argue
And count the widening ripples where they sank.
October comes with rain whipping around the ankles
In waves of white at night
And filling the raw clay trenches (the parks of London
Are a nasty sight).
In a week I return to work, lecturing, coaching,
As impresario of the Ancient Greeks
Who wore the chiton and lived on fish and olives
And talked philosophy or smut in cliques;
Who believed in youth and did not gloze the unpleasant
Consequences of age;
What is life, one said, or what is pleasant
Once you have turned the page
Of love? The days grow worse, the dice are loaded
Against the living man who pays in tears for breath;

Never to be born was the best, call no man happy
This side death.
Conscious—long before Engels—of necessity
And therein free
They plotted out their life with truism and humour
Between the jealous heaven and the callous sea.
And Pindar sang the garland of wild olive
And Alcibiades lived from hand to mouth
Double-crossing Athens, Persia, Sparta,
And many died in the city of plague, and many of drouth
In Sicilian quarries, and many by the spear and arrow
And many more who told their lies too late
Caught in the eternal factions and reactions
Of the city-state.
And free speech shivered on the pikes of Macedonia
And later on the swords of Rome
And Athens became a mere university city
And the goddess born of the foam
Became the kept hetaera, heroine of Menander,
And the philosopher narrowed his focus, confined
His efforts to putting his own soul in order
And keeping a quiet mind.
And for a thousand years they went on talking,
Making such apt remarks,
A race no longer of heroes but of professors
And crooked business men and secretaries and clerks;
Who turned out dapper little elegiac verses
On the ironies of fate, the transience of all
Affections, carefully shunning an over-statement
But working the dying fall.
The Glory that was Greece: put it in a syllabus, grade it
Page by page

To train the mind or even to point a moral
For the present age:
Models of logic and lucidity, dignity, sanity,
The golden mean between opposing ills
Though there were exceptions of course but only exceptions—
The bloody Bacchanals on the Thracian hills.
So the humanist in his room with Jacobean panels
Chewing his pipe and looking on a lazy quad
Chops the Ancient World to turn a sermon
To the greater glory of God.
But I can do nothing so useful or so simple;
These dead are dead
And when I should remember the paragons of Hellas
I think instead
Of the crooks, the adventurers, the opportunists,
The careless athletes and the fancy boys,
The hair-splitters, the pedants, the hard-boiled sceptics
And the Agora and the noise
Of the demagogues and the quacks; and the women pouring
Libations over graves
And the trimmers at Delphi and the dummies at Sparta and lastly
I think of the slaves.
And how one can imagine oneself among them
I do not know;
It was all so unimaginably different
And all so long ago.

X

And so return to work—the M.A. gown,
Alphas and Betas, central heating, floor-polish,
Demosthenes on the Crown
And Oedipus at Colonus.
And I think of the beginnings of other terms
Coming across the sea to unknown England
And memory reaffirms
That alarm and exhilaration of arrival:
White wooden boxes, clatter of boots, a smell
Of changing-rooms—Lifebuoy soap and muddy flannels—
And over all a bell
Dragooning us to dormitory or classroom,
Ringing with a tongue of frost across the bare
Benches and desks escutcheoned with initials;
We sat on the hot pipes by the wall, aware
Of the cold in our bones and the noise and the bell impending.
A fishtail gas-flare in the dark latrine;
Chalk and ink and rows of pegs and lockers;
The War was on—maize and margarine
And lessons on the map of Flanders.

But we had our toys—our electric torches, our glass
Dogs and cats, and plasticine and conkers,
And we had our games, we learned to dribble and pass
In jerseys striped like tigers.
And we had our makebelieve, we had our mock
Freedom in walks by twos and threes on Sunday,
We dug out fossils from the yellow rock
Or drank the Dorset distance.
And we had our little tiptoe minds, alert
To jump for facts and fancies and statistics
And our little jokes of Billy Bunter dirt
And a heap of home-made dogma.
The Abbey chimes varnished the yellow street,
The water from the taps in the bath was yellow,
The trees were full of owls, the sweets were sweet
And life an expanding ladder.
And reading romances we longed to be grown up,
To shoot from the hip and marry lovely ladies
And smoke cigars and live on claret cup
And lie in bed in the morning;
Taking it for granted that things would still
Get better and bigger and better and bigger and
better,
That the road across the hill
Led to the Garden of Eden;
Everything to expect and nothing to deplore,
Cushy days beyond the dumb horizon
And nothing to doubt about, to linger for
In the halfway house of childhood.
And certainly we did not linger, we went on
Growing and growing, gluttons for the future,
And four foot six was gone
And we found it was time to be leaving

To be changing school, sandstone changed for chalk
And ammonites for the flinty husks of sponges,
Another lingo to talk
And jerseys in other colours.
And still the acquiring of unrelated facts,
A string of military dates for history,
And the Gospels and the Acts
And logarithms and Greek and the Essays of Elia;
And still the exhilarating rhythm of free
Movement swimming or serving at tennis,
The fives-courts' tattling repartee
Or rain on the sweating body.
But life began to narrow to what was done—
The dominant gerundive—
And Number Two must mimic Number One
In bearing, swearing, attitude and accent.
And so we jettisoned all
Our childish fantasies and anarchism;
The weak must go to the wall
But strength implies the system;
You must lose your soul to be strong, you cannot stand
Alone on your own legs or your own ideas;
The order of the day is complete conformity and
An automatic complacence.
Such was the order of the day; only at times
The Fool among the yes-men flashed his motley
To prick their pseudo-reason with his rhymes
And drop his grain of salt on court behaviour.
And sometimes a whisper in books
Would challenge the code, or a censored memory
sometimes,
Sometimes the explosion of rooks,
Sometimes the mere batter of light on the senses.

And the critic jailed in the mind would peep through the
grate
And husky from long silence, murmur gently
That there is something rotten in the state
Of Denmark but the state is not the whole of Denmark;
And a spade is still a spade
And the difference is not final between a tailored
Suit and a ready-made
And knowledge is not—necessarily—wisdom;
And a cultured accent alone will not provide
A season ticket to the Vita Nuova;
And there are many better men outside
Than ever answered roll-call.
But the critic did not win, has not won yet
Though always reminding us of points forgotten;
We hasten to forget
As much as he remembers.
And school was what they always said it was,
An apprenticeship to life, an initiation,
And all the better because
The initiates were blindfold;
The reflex action of a dog or sheep
Being enough for normal avocations
And life rotating in an office sleep
As long as things are normal.
Which it was assumed that they would always be;
On that assumption terms began and ended;
And now, in 1938 A.D.,
Term is again beginning.

xi

But work is alien; what do I care for the Master
Of those who know, of those who know too much?
I am too harassed by my familiar devils,
By those I cannot see, by those I may not touch;
Knowing perfectly well in the mind, on paper,
How wasteful and absurd
Are personal fixations but yet the pulse keeps thrumming
And her voice is faintly heard
Through walls and walls of indifference and abstraction
And across the London roofs
And every so often calls up hopes from nowhere,
A distant clatter of hoofs,
And my common sense denies she is returning
And says, if she does return, she will not stay;
And my pride, in the name of reason, tells me to cut my losses
And call it a day.
Which, if I had the cowardice of my convictions,
I certainly should do
But doubt still finds a loophole
To gamble on another rendezvous.
And I try to feel her in fancy but the fancy
Dissolves in curls of mist

And I try to summarise her but how can hungry
Love be a proper analyst?
For suddenly I hate her and would murder
Her memory if I could
And then of a sudden I see her sleeping gently
Inaccessible in a sleeping wood
But thorns and thorns around her
And the cries of night
And I have no knife or axe to hack my passage
Back to the lost delight.
And then I think of the others and jealousy riots
In impossible schemes
To kill them with all the machinery of fact and with all
the
Tortures of dreams.
But yet, my dear, if only for my own distraction,
I have to try to assess
Your beauty of body, your paradoxes of spirit,
Even your taste in dress.
Whose emotions are an intricate dialectic,
Whose eagerness to live
A many-sided life might be deplored as fickle,
Unpractical, or merely inquisitive.
A superficial comment; for your instinct
Sanctions all you do,
Who know that truth is nothing in abstraction,
That action makes both wish and principle come true;
Whose changes have the logic of a prism,
Whose moods create,
Who never linger haggling on the threshold,
To weigh the pros and cons until it is too late.
At times intractable, virulent, hypercritical,
With a bitter tongue;

Over-shy at times, morose, defeatist,
At times a token that the world is young;
Given to over-statement, careless of caution,
Quick to sound the chimes
Of delicate intuition, at times malicious
And generous at times.
Whose kaleidoscopic ways are all authentic,
Whose truth is not of a statement but of a dance
So that even when you deceive your deceits are merely
Technical and of no significance.
And so, when I think of you, I have to meet you
In thought on your own ground;
To apply to you my algebraic canons
Would merely be unsound;
And, having granted this, I cannot balance
My hopes or fears of you in pros and cons;
It has been proved that Achilles cannot catch the Tortoise,
It has been proved that men are automatons,
Everything wrong has been proved. I will not bother
Any more with proof;
I see the future glinting with your presence
Like moon on a slate roof,
And my spirits rise again. It is October,
The year-god dying on the destined pyre
With all the colours of a scrambled sunset
And all the funeral elegance of fire
In the grey world to lie cocooned but shaping
His gradual return;
No one can stop the cycle;
The grate is full of ash but fire will always burn.
Therefore, listening to the taxis
(In which you never come) so regularly pass,
I wait content, banking on the spring and watching
The dead leaves canter over the dowdy grass.

xii

These days are misty, insulated, mute
 Like a faded tapestry and the soft pedal
Is down and the yellow leaves are falling down
 And we hardly have the heart to meddle
Any more with personal ethics or public calls;
 People have not recovered from the crisis,
Their faces are far away, the tone of the words
 Belies their thesis.
For they say that now it is time unequivocally to
 act,
 To let the pawns be taken,
That criticism, a virtue previously,
 Now can only weaken
And that when we go to Rome
 We must do as the Romans do, cry out together
For bread and circuses; put on your togas now
 For this is Roman weather.
Circuses of death and from the topmost tiers
 A cataract of goggling, roaring faces;
On the arena sand
 Those who are about to die try out their paces.
Now it is night, a cold mist creeps, the night
 Is still and damp and lonely;

Sitting by the fire it is hard to realise
That the legions wait at the gates and that there is only
A little time for rest though not by rights for rest,
Rather for whetting the will, for calculating
A compromise between necessity and wish,
Apprenticed late to learn the trade of hating.
Remember the sergeant barking at bayonet practice
When you were small;
To kill a dummy you must act a dummy
Or you cut no ice at all.
Now it is morning again, the 25th of October,
In a white fog the cars have yellow lights;
The chill creeps up the wrists, the sun is sallow,
The silent hours grow down like stalactites.
And reading Plato talking about his Forms
To damn the artist touting round his mirror,
I am glad that I have been left the third best bed
And live in a world of error.
His world of capital initials, of transcendent
Ideas is too bleak;
For me there remain to all intents and purposes
Seven days in the week
And no one Tuesday is another and you destroy it
If you subtract the difference and relate
It merely to the Form of Tuesday. This is Tuesday
The 25th of October, 1938.
Aristotle was better who watched the insect breed,
The natural world develop,
Stressing the function, scrapping the Form in Itself,
Taking the horse from the shelf and letting it gallop.
Education gives us too many labels
And clichés, cuts too many Gordian knots;

Trains us to keep the roads nor reconnoitre
Any of the beauty-spots or danger-spots.
Not that I would rather be a peasant; the Happy Peasant
Like the Noble Savage is a myth;
I do not envy the self-possession of an elm-tree
Nor the aplomb of a granite monolith.
All that I would like to be is human, having a share
In a civilised, articulate and well-adjusted
Community where the mind is given its due
But the body is not distrusted.
As it is, the so-called humane studies
May lead to cushy jobs
But leave the men who land them spiritually bankrupt
Intellectual snobs.
Not but what I am glad to have my comforts,
Better authentic mammon than a bogus god;
If it were not for Lit.Hum. I might be climbing
A ladder with a hod.
And seven hundred a year
Will pay the rent and the gas and the 'phone and the grocer;
(The Emperor takes his seat beneath the awning,
Those who are about to die . . .) Come, pull the curtains closer.

xiii

Which things being so, as we said when we studied
The classics, I ought to be glad
That I studied the classics at Marlborough and Merton,
Not everyone here having had
The privilege of learning a language
That is incontrovertibly dead,
And of carting a toy-box of hall-marked marmoreal phrases
Around in his head.
We wrote compositions in Greek which they said was a lesson
In logic and good for the brain;
We marched, counter-marched to the field-marshal's blue-pencil baton,
We dressed by the right and we wrote out the sentence again.
We learned that a gentleman never misplaces his accents,
That nobody knows how to speak, much less how to write
English who has not hob-nobbed with the great-grand-parents of English,
That the boy on the Modern Side is merely a parasite

But the classical student is bred to the purple, his training in syntax
Is also a training in thought
And even in morals; if called to the bar or the barracks
He always will do what he ought.
And knowledge, besides, should be prized for the sake of knowledge:
Oxford crowded the mantelpiece with gods—
Scaliger, Heinsius, Dindorf, Bentley and Wilamowitz—
As we learned our genuflexions for Honour Mods.
And then they taught us philosophy, logic and metaphysics,
The Negative Judgment and the Ding an Sich,
And every single thinker was powerful as Napoleon
And crafty as Metternich.
And it really was very attractive to be able to talk about tables
And to ask if the table *is*,
And to draw the cork out of an old conundrum
And watch the paradoxes fizz.
And it made one confident to think that nothing
Really was what it seemed under the sun,
That the actual was not real and the real was not with us
And all that mattered was the One.
And they said 'The man in the street is so naïve, he never
Can see the wood for the trees;
He thinks he knows he sees a thing but cannot
Tell you how he knows the thing he thinks he sees.'
And oh how much I liked the Concrete Universal,
I never thought that I should
Be telling them vice-versa
That they can't see the trees for the wood.

But certainly it was fun while it lasted
And I got my honours degree
And was stamped as a person of intelligence and culture
For ever wherever two or three
Persons of intelligence and culture
Are gathered together in talk
Writing definitions on invisible blackboards
In non-existent chalk.
But such sacramental occasions
Are nowadays comparatively rare;
There is always a wife or a boss or a dun or a client
Disturbing the air.
Barbarians always, life in the particular always,
Dozens of men in the street,
And the perennial if unimportant problem
Of getting enough to eat.
So blow the bugles over the metaphysicians,
Let the pure mind return to the Pure Mind;
I must be content to remain in the world of Appearance
And sit on the mere appearance of a behind.
But in case you should think my education was wasted
I hasten to explain
That having once been to the University of Oxford
You can never really again
Believe anything that anyone says and that of course is an asset
In a world like ours;
Why bother to water a garden
That is planted with paper flowers?
O the Freedom of the Press, the Late Night Final,
To-morrow's pulp;
One should not gulp one's port but as it isn't
Port, I'll gulp it if I want to gulp

But probably I'll just enjoy the colour
And pour it down the sink
For I don't call advertisement a statement
Or any quack medicine a drink.
Good-bye now, Plato and Hegel,
The shop is closing down;
They don't want any philosopher-kings in England,
There ain't no universals in this man's town.

XIV

The next day I drove by night
 Among red and amber and green, spears and candles,
Corkscrews and slivers of reflected light
 In the mirror of the rainy asphalt
Along the North Circular and the Great West roads
 Running the gauntlet of impoverished fancy
Where housewives bolster up their jerry-built abodes
 With *amour propre* and the habit of Hire Purchase.
The wheels whished in the wet, the flashy strings
 Of neon lights unravelled, the windscreen-wiper
Kept at its job like a tiger in a cage or a cricket that
 sings
 All night through for nothing.
Factory, a site for a factory, rubbish dumps,
 Bungalows in lath and plaster, in brick, in concrete,
And shining semi-circles of petrol pumps
 Like intransigent gangs of idols.
And the road swings round my head like a lassoo
 Looping wider and wider tracts of darkness
And the country succeeds the town and the country too
 Is damp and dark and evil.
And coming over the Chilterns the dead leaves leap
 Charging the windscreen like a barrage of angry

Birds as I take the steep
 Plunge to Henley or Hades.
And at the curves of the road the telephone wires
 Shine like strands of silk and the hedge solicits
My irresponsible tyres
 To an accident, to a bed in the wet grasses.
And in quiet crooked streets only the village pub
 Spills a golden puddle
Over the pavement and trees bend down and rub
 Unopened dormer windows with their knuckles.
Nettlebed, Shillingford, Dorchester—each unrolls
 The road to Oxford; *Qu'allais-je faire* to-morrow
Driving voters to the polls
 In that home of lost illusions?
And what am I doing it for?
 Mainly for fun, partly for a half-believed-in
Principle, a core
 Of fact in a pulp of verbiage,
Remembering that this crude and so-called obsolete
 Top-heavy tedious parliamentary system
Is our only ready weapon to defeat
 The legions' eagles and the lictors' axes;
And remembering that those who by their habit
 hate
 Politics can no longer keep their private
Values unless they open the public gate
 To a better political system.
That Rome was not built in a day is no excuse
 For *laissez-faire*, for bowing to the odds against us;
What is the use
 Of asking what is the use of one brick only:
The perfectionist stands for ever in a fog
 Waiting for the fog to clear; better to be vulgar

And use your legs and leave a blank for Hogg
 And put a cross for Lindsay.
There are only too many who say 'What difference does it
 make
 One way or the other?
To turn the stream of history will take
 More than a by-election.'
So Thursday came and Oxford went to the polls
 And made its coward vote and the streets resounded
To the triumphant cheers of the lost souls—
 The profiteers, the dunderheads, the smarties.
And I drove back to London in the dark of the morning,
 the trees
 Standing out in the headlights cut from cardboard;
Wondering which disease
 Is worse—the Status Quo or the Mere Utopia.
For from now on
 Each occasion must be used, however trivial,
To rally the ranks of those whose chance will soon be
 gone
 For even guerrilla warfare.
The nicest people in England have always been the least
 Apt to solidarity or alignment
But all of them must now align against the beast
 That prowls at every door and barks in every headline.
Dawn and London and daylight and last the sun:
 I stop the car and take the yellow placard
Off the bonnet; that little job is done
 Though without success or glory.
The plane-tree leaves come sidling down
 (Catch my guineas, catch my guineas)
And the sun caresses Camden Town,
 The barrows of oranges and apples

XV

Shelley and jazz and lieder and love and hymn-tunes
And day returns too soon;
We'll get drunk among the roses
In the valley of the moon.
Give me an aphrodisiac, give me lotus,
Give me the same again;
Make all the erotic poets of Rome and Ionia
And Florence and Provence and Spain
Pay a tithe of their sugar to my potion
And ferment my days
With the twang of Hawaii and the boom of the Congo;
Let the old Muse loosen her stays
Or give me a new Muse with stockings and suspenders
And a smile like cat,
With false eyelashes and finger-nails of carmine
And dressed by Schiaparelli, with a pill-box hat.
Let the aces run riot round Brooklands,
Let the tape-machines go drunk,
Turn on the purple spotlight, pull out the Vox
Humana,
Dig up somebody's body in a cloakroom trunk.
Give us sensations and then again sensations—
Strip-tease, fireworks, all-in wrestling, gin;

Spend your capital, open your house and pawn your
padlocks,
Let the critical sense go out and the Roaring Boys
come in.
Give me a houri but houris are too easy,
Give me a nun;
We'll rape the angels off the golden reredos
Before we're done.
Tiger-women and Lesbos, drums and entrails,
And let the skies rotate,
We'll play roulette with the stars, we'll sit out drinking
At the Hangman's Gate.
O look who comes here. I cannot see their faces
Walking in file, slowly in file;
They have no shoes on their feet, the knobs of their
ankles
Catch the moonlight as they pass the stile
And cross the moor among the skeletons of bog-oak
Following the track from the gallows back to the
town;
Each has the end of a rope around his neck. I wonder
Who let these men come back, who cut them
down—
And now they reach the gate and line up opposite
The neon lights on the medieval wall
And underneath the sky-signs
Each one takes his cowl and lets it fall
And we see their faces, each the same as the other,
Men and women, each like a closed door,
But something about their faces is familiar;
Where have we seen them before?
Was it the murderer on the nursery ceiling
Or Judas Iscariot in the Field of Blood

Or someone at Gallipoli or in Flanders
Caught in the end-all mud.
But take no notice of them, out with the ukulele,
The saxophone and the dice;
They are sure to go away if we take no notice;
Another round of drinks or make it twice.
That was a good one, tell us another, don't stop talking,
Cap your stories; if
You haven't any new ones tell the old ones,
Tell them as often as you like and perhaps those horrible stiff
People with blank faces that are yet familiar
Won't be there when you look again, but don't
Look just yet, just give them time to vanish. I said to vanish;
What do you mean—they won't?
Give us the songs of Harlem or Mitylene—
Pearls in wine—
There can't be a hell unless there is a heaven
And a devil would have to be divine
And there can't be such things one way or the other;
That we know;
You can't step into the same river twice so there can't be
Ghosts; thank God that rivers always flow.
Sufficient to the moment is the moment;
Past and future merely don't make sense
And yet I thought I had seen them . . .
But *how*, if there is only a present tense?
Come on, boys, we aren't afraid of bogies,
Give us another drink;

This little lady has a fetish,
She goes to bed in mink.
This little pig went to market—
Now I think you may look, I think the coast is clear.
Well, why don't you answer?
I can't answer because they are still there.

XVI

Nightmare leaves fatigue:
We envy men of action
Who sleep and wake, murder and intrigue
Without being doubtful, without being haunted.
And I envy the intransigence of my own
Countrymen who shoot to kill and never
See the victim's face become their own
Or find his motive sabotage their motives.
So reading the memoirs of Maud Gonne,
Daughter of an English mother and a soldier father,
I note how a single purpose can be founded on
A jumble of opposites:
Dublin Castle, the vice-regal ball,
The embassies of Europe,
Hatred scribbled on a wall,
Gaols and revolvers.
And I remember, when I was little, the fear
Bandied among the servants
That Casement would land at the pier
With a sword and a horde of rebels;
And how we used to expect, at a later date,
When the wind blew from the west, the noise of
shooting

Starting in the evening at eight
In Belfast in the York Street district;
And the voodoo of the Orange bands
Drawing an iron net through darkest Ulster,
Flailing the limbo lands—
The linen mills, the long wet grass, the ragged
hawthorn.
And one read black where the other read white, his hope
The other man's damnation:
Up the Rebels, To Hell with the Pope,
And God Save—as you prefer—the King or Ireland.
The land of scholars and saints:
Scholars and saints my eye, the land of ambush,
Purblind manifestoes, never-ending complaints,
The born martyr and the gallant ninny;
The grocer drunk with the drum,
The land-owner shot in his bed, the angry voices
Piercing the broken fanlight in the slum,
The shawled woman weeping at the garish altar.
Kathaleen ni Houlihan! Why
Must a country, like a ship or a car, be always female,
Mother or sweetheart? A woman passing by,
We did but see her passing.
Passing like a patch of sun on the rainy hill
And yet we love her for ever and hate our neighbour
And each one in his will
Binds his heirs to continuance of hatred.
Drums on the haycock, drums on the harvest, black
Drums in the night shaking the windows:
King William is riding his white horse back
To the Boyne on a banner.
Thousands of banners, thousands of white
Horses, thousands of Williams

Waving thousands of swords and ready to fight
Till the blue sea turns to orange.
Such was my country and I thought I was well
Out of it, educated and domiciled in England,
Though yet her name keeps ringing like a bell
In an under-water belfry.
Why do we like being Irish? Partly because
It gives us a hold on the sentimental English
As members of a world that never was,
Baptised with fairy water;
And partly because Ireland is small enough
To be still thought of with a family feeling,
And because the waves are rough
That split her from a more commercial culture;
And because one feels that here at least one can
Do local work which is not at the world's mercy
And that on this tiny stage with luck a man
Might see the end of one particular action.
It is self-deception of course;
There is no immunity in this island either;
A cart that is drawn by somebody else's horse
And carrying goods to somebody else's market.
The bombs in the turnip sack, the sniper from the
roof,
Griffith, Connolly, Collins, where have they brought
us?
Ourselves alone! Let the round tower stand aloof
In a world of bursting mortar!
Let the school-children fumble their sums
In a half-dead language;
Let the censor be busy on the books; pull down the
Georgian slums;
Let the games be played in Gaelic.

Let them grow beet-sugar; let them build
A factory in every hamlet;
Let them pigeon-hole the souls of the killed
Into sheep and goats, patriots and traitors.
And the North, where I was a boy,
Is still the North, veneered with the grime of Glasgow,
Thousands of men whom nobody will employ
Standing at the corners, coughing.
And the street-children play on the wet
Pavement—hopscotch or marbles;
And each rich family boasts a sagging tennis-net
On a spongy lawn beside a dripping shrubbery.
The smoking chimneys hint
At prosperity round the corner
But they make their Ulster linen from foreign lint
And the money that comes in goes out to make more money.
A city built upon mud;
A culture built upon profit;
Free speech nipped in the bud,
The minority always guilty.
Why should I want to go back
To you, Ireland, my Ireland?
The blots on the page are so black
That they cannot be covered with shamrock.
I hate your grandiose airs,
Your sob-stuff, your laugh and your swagger,
Your assumption that everyone cares
Who is the king of your castle.
Castles are out of date,
The tide flows round the children's sandy fancy;
Put up what flag you like, it is too late
To save your soul with bunting.

Odi atque amo:
Shall we cut this name on trees with a rusty dagger?
Her mountains are still blue, her rivers flow
Bubbling over the boulders.
She is both a bore and a bitch;
Better close the horizon,
Send her no more fantasy, no more longings which
Are under a fatal tariff.
For common sense is the vogue
And she gives her children neither sense nor money
Who slouch around the world with a gesture and a brogue
And a faggot of useless memories.

xvii

From the second floor up, looking north, having breakfast
I see the November sun at nine o'clock
Gild the fusty brickwork of rows on rows of houses
Like animals asleep and breathing smoke
And savouring Well-being
I light my first cigarette, grow giddy and blink,
Glad of this titillation, this innuendo,
This make-believe of standing on a brink;
For all our trivial daily acts are altered
Into heroic or romantic make-believe
Of which we are hardly conscious—Who is it calls me
When the cold draught picks my sleeve?
Or sneezing in the morning sunlight or smelling the bonfire
Over the webbed lawn and the naked cabbage plot?
Or stepping into a fresh-filled bath with strata
Of cold water and hot?
We lie in the bath between tiled walls and under
Ascending scrolls of steam
And feel the ego merge as the pores open
And we lie in the bath and dream;
And responsibility dies and the thighs are happy
And the body purrs like a cat

But this lagoon grows cold, we have to leave it, stepping
On to a check rug on a cork mat.
The luxury life is only to be valued
By those who are short of money or pressed for time
As the cinema gives the poor their Jacob's ladder
For Cinderellas to climb.
And Plato was right to define the bodily pleasures
As the pouring water into a hungry sieve
But wrong to ignore the rhythm which the intercrossing
Coloured waters permanently give.
And Aristotle was right to posit the Alter Ego
But wrong to make it only a halfway house:
Who could expect—or want—to be spiritually self-
supporting,
Eternal self-abuse?
Why not admit that other people are always
Organic to the self, that a monologue
Is the death of language and that a single lion
Is less himself, or alive, than a dog and another dog?
Virtue going out of us always; the eyes grow weary
With vision but it is vision builds the eye;
And in a sense the children kill their parents
But do the parents die?
And the beloved destroys like fire or water
But water scours and sculps and fire refines
And if you are going to read the testaments of cynics,
You must read between the lines.
A point here and a point there: the current
Jumps the gaps, the ego cannot live
Without becoming other for the Other
Has got yourself to give.
And even the sense of taste provides communion
With God as plant or beast;

The sea in fish, the field in a salad of endive,
A sacramental feast.
The soul's long searchlight hankers for a body,
The single body hungers for its kind,
The eye demands the light at the risk of blindness
And the mind that did not doubt would not be
mind
And discontent is eternal. In luxury or business,
In family or sexual love, in purchases or prayers,
Our virtue is invested, the self put out at interest,
The returns are never enough, the fact compares
So badly with the fancy yet fancy itself is only
A divination of fact
And if we confine the world to the prophet's tripod
The subjects of our prophecy contract.
Open the world wide, open the senses,
Let the soul stretch its blind enormous arms,
There is vision in the fingers only needing waking,
Ready for light's alarms.
O light, terror of light, hoofs and ruthless
Wheels of steel and brass
Dragging behind you lacerated captives
Who also share your triumph as you pass.
Light which is time, belfry of booming sunlight,
The ropes run up and down,
The whole town shakes with the peal of living people
Who break and build the town.
Aristotle was right to think of man-in-action
As the essential and really existent man
And man means men in action; try and confine your
Self to yourself if you can.
Nothing is self-sufficient, pleasure implies hunger
But hunger implies hope:

I cannot lie in this bath for ever, clouding
The cooling water with rose geranium soap.
I cannot drug my life with the present moment;
The present moment may rape—but all in vain—
The future, for the future remains a virgin
Who must be tried again.

XVIII

In the days that were early the music came easy
On cradle and coffin, in the corn and the barn,
Songs for the reaping and spinning and only the shepherd
Then as now was silent beside the tarn:
Cuffs of foam around the beer-brown water,
Crinkled water and a mackerel sky;
It is all in the day's work—the grey stones and heather
And the sheep that breed and break their legs and die.
The uplands now as then are fresh but in the valley
Polluted rivers run—the Lethe and the Styx;
The soil is tired and the profit little and the hunchback
Bobs on a carthorse round the sodden ricks.
Sing us no more idylls, no more pastorals,
No more epics of the English earth;
The country is a dwindling annexe to the factory,
Squalid as an after-birth.
This England is tight and narrow, teeming with unwanted
Children who are so many, each is alone;
Niobe and her children
Stand beneath the smokestack turned to stone.

And still the church-bells brag above the empty churches
And the Union Jack
Thumps the wind above the law-courts and the barracks
And in the allotments the black
Scarecrow holds a fort of grimy heads of cabbage
Besieged by grimy birds
Like a hack politician fighting the winged aggressor
With yesterday's magic coat of ragged words.
Things were different when men felt their programme
In the bones and pulse, not only in the brain,
Born to a trade, a belief, a set of affections;
That instinct for belief may sprout again,
There are some who have never lost it
And some who foster or force it into growth
But most of us lack the right discontent, contented
Merely to cavil. Spiritual sloth
Creeps like lichen or ivy over the hinges
Of the doors which never move;
We cannot even remember who is behind them
Nor even, soon, shall have the chance to prove
If anyone at all is behind them—
The Sleeping Beauty or the Holy Ghost
Or the greatest happiness of the greatest number;
All we can do at most
Is press an anxious ear against the keyhole
To hear the Future breathing; softly tread
In the outer porch beneath the marble volutes—
Who knows if God, as Nietzsche said, is dead?
There is straw to lay in the streets; call the hunchback,
The gentleman farmer, the village idiot, the Shropshire
Lad,
To insulate us if they can with coma
Before we all go mad.

What shall we pray for, Lord? Whom shall we pray to?
Shall we give like decadent Athens the benefit of the doubt
To the Unknown God or smugly pantheistic
Assume that God is everywhere round about?
But if we assume such a God, then who the devil
Are these with empty stomachs or empty smiles?
The blind man's stick goes tapping on the pavement
For endless glittering miles
Beneath the standard lights; the paralytic winding
His barrel-organ sprays the passers-by
With April music; the many-ribboned hero
With half a lung or a leg waits his turn to die.
God forbid an Indian acquiescence,
The apotheosis of the status quo;
If everything that happens happens according
To the nature and wish of God, then God must go:
Lay your straw in the streets and go about your business
An inch at a time, an inch at a time,
We have not even an hour to spend repenting
Our sins; the quarters chime
And every minute is its own alarum clock
And what we are about to do
Is of vastly more importance
Than what we have done or not done hitherto.
It is December now, the trees are naked
As the three crosses on the hill;
Through the white fog the face of the orange sun is cryptic
Like a lawyer making the year's will.
The year has little to show, will leave a heavy
Overdraft to its heir;
Shall we try to meet the deficit or passing
By on the other side continue *laissez-faire*?

International betrayals, public murder,
The devil quoting scripture, the traitor, the coward,
the thug
Eating dinner in the name of peace and progress,
The doped public sucking a dry dug;
Official recognition of rape, revival of the ghetto
And free speech gagged and free
Energy scrapped and dropped like surplus herring
Back into the barren sea;
Brains and beauty festering in exile,
The shadow of bars
Falling across each page, each field, each raddled sunset,
The alien lawn and the pool of nenuphars;
And hordes of homeless poor running the gauntlet
In hostile city streets of white and violet lamps
Whose flight is without a terminus but better
Than the repose of concentration camps.
Come over, they said, into Macedonia and help us
But the chance is gone;
Now we must help ourselves, we can leave the vulture
To pick the corpses clean in Macedon.
No wonder many would renounce their birthright,
The responsibility of moral choice,
And sit with a mess of pottage taking orders
Out of a square box from a mad voice—
Lies on the air endlessly repeated
Turning the air to fog,
Blanket on blanket of lie, no room to breathe or fidget
And nobody to jog
Your elbow and say 'Up there the sun is rising;
Take it on trust, the sun will always shine.'
The sun may shine no doubt but how many people
Will see it with their eyes in 1939?

Yes, the earlier days had their music,
We have some still to-day,
But the orchestra is due for the bonfire
If things go on this way.
Still there are still the seeds of energy and choice
Still alive even if forbidden, hidden,
And while a man has voice
He may recover music.

XIX

The pigeons riddle the London air,
 The shutter slides from the chain-store window,
The frock-coat statue stands in the square
 Caring for no one, caring for no one.
The night-shift men go home to bed,
 The kettle sings and the bacon sizzles;
Some are hungry and some are dead—
 A wistful face in a faded photo.
Under the stairs is a khaki cap;
 That was Dad's, Dad was a plumber—
You hear that dripping tap?
 He'd have had it right in no time.
No time now; Dad is dead,
 He left me five months gone or over;
Tam cari capitis, for such a well-loved head
 What shame in tears, what limit?
It is the child I mean,
 Born prematurely, strangled;
Dad was off the scene,
 He would have made no difference.
The stretchers run from ward to ward,
 The telephone rings in empty houses,
The torn shirt soaks on the scrubbing board,
 O what a busy morning.

Baby Croesus crawls in a pen
With alphabetical bricks and biscuits;
The doll-dumb file of sandwichmen
Carry lies from gutter to gutter.
The curate buys his ounce of shag,
The typist tints her nails with coral,
The housewife with her shopping bag
Watches the cleaver catch the naked
New Zealand sheep between the legs—
What price now New Zealand?
The cocker spaniel sits and begs
With eyes like a waif on the movies.
O what a busy morning,
Engines start with a roar,
All the wires are buzzing,
The tape-machines vomit on the floor.
And I feel that my mind once again is open,
The lady is gone who stood in the way so long,
The hypnosis is over and no one
Calls encore to the song.
When we are out of love, how were we ever in it?
Where are the mountains and the mountain skies,
That heady air instinct with
A strange sincerity which winged our lies?
The peaks have fallen in like dropping pastry:
Now I could see her come
Around the corner without the pulse responding,
The flowery orator in the heart is dumb,
His bag of tricks is empty, his over-statements,
Those rainbow bubbles, have burst:
When we meet, she need not feel embarrassed,
The cad with the golden tongue has done his worst

And has no orders from me to mix his phrases rich,
To make the air a carpet
For her to walk on; I only wonder which
Day, which hour, I found this freedom.
But freedom is not so exciting,
We prefer to be drawn
In the rush of the stars as they circle—
A traffic that ends with dawn.
Now I am free of the stars
And the word 'love' makes no sense, this history is almost
Ripe for the mind's museum—broken jars
That once held wine or perfume.
Yet looking at their elegance on the stands
I feel a certain pride that only lately
(And yet so long ago) I held them in my hands
While they were full and fragrant.
So on this busy morning I hope, my dear,
That you are also busy
With another vintage of another year;
I wish you luck and I thank you for the party—
A good party though at the end my thirst
Was worse than at the beginning
But never to have drunk no doubt would be the worst;
Pain, they say, is always twin to pleasure.
Better to have these twins
Than no children at all, very much better
To act for good and bad than have no sins
And take no action either.
You were my blizzard who had been my bed
But taking the whole series of blight and blossom
I would not choose a simpler crop instead;
Thank you, my dear—dear against my judgment.

XX

Nelson stands on a black pillar,
The electric signs go off and on—
Distilleries and life insurance companies—
The traffic circles, coming and gone,
Past the National Gallery closed and silent
Where in their frames
Other worlds persist, the passions of the artist
Caught like frozen flames:
The Primitives distilling from the cruel
Legend a faith that is almost debonair,
Sebastian calmly waiting the next arrow,
The crucifixion in the candid air:
And Venice lolling in wealth for ever under glass,
Pearls in her hair, panther and velvet:
And the rococo picnic on the grass
With wine and lutes and banter:
And the still life proclaiming with aplomb
The self-content of bread or fruit or vases
And personality like a silent bomb
Lurking in the formal portrait.
Here every day the visitors walk slowly
Rocking along the parquet as if on a ship's deck
Feeling a vague affinity with the pictures
Yet wary of these waves which gently peck

The side of the boat in passing; they are anxious
To end the voyage, to land in their own time;
The sea of the past glimmers with white horses,
A paradigm
Of life's successions, treacheries, recessions;
The unfounded confidence of the dead affronts
Our own system of values
Like airmen doing their stunts
Over our private garden; these arrogant Old Masters
Swoop and loop and lance us with a quick
Shadow; we only want to cultivate our garden,
Not for us the virtuoso, slick
Tricks of the airy region,
For our part our feet are on the ground,
They should not be allowed to fly so low above us,
Their premises are unsound
And history has refuted them and yet
They cast their shadows on us like aspersions;
Propellers and white horses,
Movement, movement, can we never forget
The movements of the past which should be dead?
The mind of Socrates still clicks like scissors
And Christ who should lie quiet in the garden
Flowered in flame instead.

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A week to Christmas, cards of snow and holly,
Gimcracks in the shops,
Wishes and memories wrapped in tissue paper,
Trinkets, gadgets and lollipops
And as if through coloured glasses
We remember our childhood's thrill
Waking in the morning to the rustling of paper,
The eiderdown heaped in a hill

Of wogs and dogs and bears and bricks and apples
And the feeling that Christmas Day
Was a coral island in time where we land and eat our lotus
But where we can never stay.
There was a star in the East, the magi in their turbans
Brought their luxury toys
In homage to a child born to capsize their values
And wreck their equipoise.
A smell of hay like peace in the dark stable—
Not peace however but a sword
To cut the Gordian knot of logical self-interest,
The fool-proof golden cord;
For Christ walked in where no philosopher treads
But armed with more than folly,
Making the smooth place rough and knocking the heads
Of Church and State together.
In honour of whom we have taken over the pagan
Saturnalia for our annual treat
Letting the belly have its say, ignoring
The spirit while we eat.
And Conscience still goes crying through the desert
With sackcloth round his loins:
A week to Christmas—hark the herald angels
Beg for copper coins.

XXI

And when we clear away
 All this debris of day-by-day experience,
What comes out to light, what is there of value
 Lasting from day to day?
I sit in my room in comfort
 Looking at enormous flowers—
Equipment purchased with my working hours,
 A daily mint of perishable petals.
The figures of the dance repeat
 The unending cycle of making and spending
 money,
Eating our daily bread in order to earn it
 And earning in order to eat.
And is that all the story,
 The mainspring and the plot,
Or merely a mechanism without which not
 Any story could be written?
Sine qua non!
 Sine qua non indeed, we cannot ever
Live by soul alone; the soul without the stomach
 Would find its glory gone.
But the total cause outruns the mere condition,
 There is more to it than that;

Life would be (as it often seems) flat
If it were merely a matter of not dying.
For each individual then
Would be fighting a losing battle
But with life as collective creation
The rout is rallied, the battle begins again.
Only give us the courage of our instinct,
The will to truth and love's initiative,
Then we could hope to live
A life beyond the self but self-completing.
And, as the emperor said, What is the use
Of the minor loyalty—'Dear city of Cecrops',
Unless we have also the wider franchise, can answer
'Dear city of Zeus'?
And so when the many regrets
Trouble us for the many lost affections,
Let us take the wider view before we count them
Hopelessly bad debts.
For Cecrops has his rights as Zeus has his
And every tree is a tree of branches
And every wood is a wood of trees growing
And what has been contributes to what is.
So I am glad to have known them,
The people or events apparently withdrawn;
The world is round and there is always dawn
Undeniably somewhere.
'Praised be thou, O Lord, for our brother the sun'
Said the grey saint, laving his eyes in colour;
Who creates and destroys for ever
And his cycle is never done.
In this room chrysanthemums and dahlias
Like brandy hit the heart; the fire,

A small wild animal, furthers its desire
 Consuming fuel, self-consuming.
And flames are the clearest cut
 Of shapes and the most transient:
O fire, my spendthrift,
 May I spend like you, as reckless but
Giving as good return—burn the silent
 Into running sound, deride the dark
And jump to glory from a single spark
 And purge the world and warm it.
The room grows cold, the flicker fades,
 The sinking ashes whisper, the fickle
Eye forgets but later will remember
 The radiant cavalcades.
The smoke has gone from the chimney,
 The water has flowed away under the bridge,
The silhouetted lovers have left the ridge,
 The flower has closed its calyx.
The crow's-feet have come to stay,
 The jokes no longer amuse, the palate
Rejects milk chocolate and Benedictine—
 Yesterday and the day before yesterday.
But oh, not now my love, but oh my friend,
 Can you not take it merely on trust that life is
The only thing worth living and that dying
 Had better be left to take care of itself in the
 end?
For to have been born is in itself a triumph
 Among all that waste of sperm
And it is gratitude to wait the proper term
 Or, if not gratitude, duty.
I know that you think these phrases high falutin
 And, when not happy, see no claim or use

For staying alive; the quiet hands seduce
Of the god who is god of nothing.
And while I sympathise
With the wish to quit, to make the great refusal,
I feel that such a defeat is also treason,
That deaths like these are lies.
A fire should be left burning
Till it burns itself out:
We shan't have another chance to dance and shout
Once the flames are silent.

XXII

December the nineteenth: over the black roofs
And the one black paint-brush poplar
The white steam rises and deploys in puffs
From the house-hidden railway, a northern
Geyser erupting in a land of lava,
But white can be still whiter for now
The dun air starts to jig with specks that circle
Like microbes under a lens; this is the first snow;
And soon the specks are feathers blandly sidling
Inconsequent as the fancies of young girls
And the air has filled like a dance-hall,
A waltz of white dresses and strings of pearls.
And the papers declare the snow has come to stay,
A new upholstery on roof and garden
Refining, lining, underlining the day,
And the sombre laurels break parole and blossom
In enormous clumps of peonies; and the cars
Turn animal, moving slowly
In their white fur like bears,
And the white trees fade into the hill behind them
As niggers' faces fade in a dark background,
Our London world

Grown all of a piece and peaceful like the Arctic,
The sums all cancelled out and the flags furled.
At night we sleep behind stockades of frost,
Nothing alive in the streets to run the gauntlet
Of this unworldly cold except the lost
Wisps of steam from the gratings of the sewers.
It is holiday time, time for the morning snack,
Time to be leaving the country:
I have taken my ticket south, I will not look back,
The pipes may burst for all I care, the gutter
Dribble with dirty snow, the Christmas party
Be ruined by catarrh;
Let us flee this country and leave its complications
Exactly where they (the devil take them) are.
So Dover to Dunkerque:
The Land of Cockayne begins across the Channel.
The hooter cries to hell with the year's work,
The snowflakes flirt with the steam of the steamer.
But the train in France is cold, the window
Frosted with patterns of stars and fern,
And when we scrape a peephole on the window
There is nothing new to learn;
Nothing but snow and snow all the way to Paris,
No roast pigs walk this way
And any snatched half-hour of self-indulgence
Is an intercalary day.
Sweet, my love, my dear, whoever you are or were,
I need your company on this excursion
For, where there is the luxury of leisure, there
There should also be the luxury of women.
I do not need you on my daily job
Nor yet on any spiritual adventure,

Not when I earn my keep but when I rob
Time of his growth of tinsel:
No longer thinking you or any other
Essential to my life—soul-mate or dual star;
All I want is an elegant and witty playmate
At the perfume counter or the cocktail bar.
So here where tourist values are the only
Values, where we pretend
That eating and drinking are more important than
thinking
And looking at things than action and a casual
friend
Than a colleague and that work is a dull convenience
Designed to provide
Money to spend on amusement and that amusement
Is an eternal bride
Who will never sink to the level of a wife, that gossip
Is the characteristic of art
And that the sensible man must keep his æsthetic
And his moral standards apart—
Here, where we think all this, I need you badly,
Whatever your name or age or the colour of your
hair;
I need your surface company (what happens
Below the surface is my own affair).
And I feel a certain pleasurable nostalgia
In sitting alone, drinking, wondering if you
Will suddenly thread your way among these vulcanite
tables
To a mutually unsuspected rendezvous
Among these banal women with feathers in their hats and
halos
Of evanescent veils

And these bald-at-thirty Englishmen whose polished
Foreheads are the tombs of record sales;
Where alcohol, anchovies and shimmying street-lamps
Knock the stolid almanac cock-a-hoop,
Where reason drowns and the senses
Foam, flame, tingle and loop the loop.
And striking red or green matches to light these loose
Cigarettes of black tobacco I need you badly—
The age-old woman apt for all misuse
Whose soul is out of the picture.
How I enjoy this bout of cynical self-indulgence,
Of glittering and hard-boiled make-believe;
The cynic is a creature of over-statements
But an overstatement is something to achieve.
And how (with a grain of salt) I enjoy hating
The world to which for ever I belong,
This hatred, this escape, being equally factitious—
A passing song.
For I cannot stay in Paris
And, if I did, no doubt I should soon be bored
For what I see is not the intimate city
But the brittle dance of lights in the Place de la
Concorde.
So much for Christmas: I must go further south
To see the New Year in on hungry faces
But where the hungry mouth
Refuses to deny the heart's allegiance.
Look: the road winds up among the prickly vineyards
And naked winter trees;
Over there are pain and pride beyond the snow-lit
Sharp annunciation of the Pyrenees.

XXIII

The road ran downhill into Spain,
 The wind blew fresh on bamboo grasses,
The white plane-trees were bone-naked
 And the issues plain:
We have come to a place in space where shortly
 All of us may be forced to camp in time:
The slender searchlights climb,
 Our sins will find us out, even our sins of omission.
When I reached the town it was dark,
 No lights in the streets but two and a half millions
Of people in circulation
 Condemned like the beasts in the ark
With nothing but water around them:
 Will there ever be a green tree or a rock that is dry?
The shops are empty and in Barceloneta the eye-
 Sockets of the houses are empty.
But still they manage to laugh
 Though they have no eggs, no milk, no fish, no fruit,
 no tobacco, no butter
Though they live upon lentils and sleep in the Metro,
 Though the old order is gone and the golden calf
Of Catalan industry shattered;
 The human values remain, purged in the fire,

And it appears that every man's desire
Is life rather than victuals.
Life being more, it seems, than merely the bare
Permission to keep alive and receive orders,
Humanity being more than a mechanism
To be oiled and greased and for ever unaware
Of the work it is turning out, of why the wheels keep
turning;
Here at least the soul has found its voice
Though not indeed by choice;
The cost was heavy.
They breathe the air of war and yet the tension
Admits, beside the slogans it evokes,
An interest in philately or pelota
Or private jokes.
And the sirens cry in the dark morning
And the lights go out and the town is still
And the sky is pregnant with ill-will
And the bombs come foxing the fated victim.
As pretty as a Guy Fawkes show—
Silver sprays and tracer bullets—
And in the pauses of destruction
The cocks in the centre of the town crow.
The cocks crow in Barcelona
Where clocks are few to strike the hour;
Is it the heart's reveille or the sour
Reproach of Simon Peter?
The year has come to an end,
Time for resolutions, for stock-taking;
Felice Nuevo Año!
May God, if there is one, send
As much courage again and greater vision
And resolve the antinomies in which we live

Where man must be either safe because he is negative
Or free on the edge of a razor.
Give those who are gentle strength,
Give those who are strong a generous imagination,
And make their half-truth true and let the crooked
Footpath find its parent road at length.
I admit that for myself I cannot straiten
My broken rambling track
Which reaches so irregularly back
To burning cities and rifled rose-bushes
And cairns and lonely farms
Where no one lives, makes love or begets children,
All my heredity and my upbringing
Having brought me only to the Present's arms—
The arms not of a mistress but of a wrestler,
Of a God who straddles over the night sky;
No wonder Jacob halted on his thigh—
The price of a drawn battle.
For never to begin
Anything new because we know there is nothing
New, is an academic sophistry—
The original sin.
I have already had friends
Among things and hours and people
But taking them one by one—odd hours and passing
people;
Now I must make amends
And try to correlate event with instinct
And me with you or you and you with all,
No longer think of time as a waterfall
Abstracted from a river.
I have loved defeat and sloth,
The tawdry halo of the idle martyr;

I have thrown away the roots of will and conscience,
 Now I must look for both,
Not any longer act among the cushions
 The Dying Gaul;
Soon or late the delights of self-pity must pall
 And the fun of cursing the wicked
World into which we were born
 And the cynical admission of frustration
('Our loves are not full measure,
 There are blight and rooks on the corn').
Rather for any measure so far given
 Let us be glad
Nor wait on purpose to be wisely sad
 When doing nothing we find we have gained nothing.
For here and now the new valkyries ride
 The Spanish constellations
As over the Plaza Cataluña
 Orion lolls on his side;
Droning over from Majorca
 To maim or blind or kill
The bearers of the living will,
 The stubborn heirs of freedom
Whose matter-of-fact faith and courage shame
 Our niggling equivocations—
We who play for safety,
 A safety only in name.
Whereas these people contain truth, whatever
 Their nominal facade.
Listen: a whirr, a challenge, an aubade—
 It is the cock crowing in Barcelona.

XXIV

Sleep, my body, sleep, my ghost,
 Sleep, my parents and grand-parents,
And all those I have loved most:
 One man's coffin is another's cradle.
Sleep, my past and all my sins,
 In distant snow or dried roses
Under the moon for night's cocoon will open
 When day begins.
Sleep, my fathers, in your graves
 On upland bogland under heather;
What the wind scatters the wind saves,
 A sapling springs in a new country.
Time is a country, the present moment
 A spotlight roving round the scene;
We need not chase the spotlight,
 The future is the bride of what has been.
Sleep, my fancies and my wishes,
 Sleep a little and wake strong,
The same but different and take my blessing—
 A cradle-song.
And sleep, my various and conflicting
 Selves I have so long endured,

Sleep in Asclepius' temple
And wake cured.
And you with whom I shared an idyll
Five years long,
Sleep beyond the Atlantic
And wake to a glitter of dew and to bird-song.
And you whose eyes are blue, whose ways are foam,
Sleep quiet and smiling
And do not hanker
For a perfection which can never come.
And you whose minutes patter
To crowd the social hours,
Curl up easy in a placid corner
And let your thoughts close in like flowers.
And you, who work for Christ, and you, as eager
For a better life, humanist, atheist,
And you, devoted to a cause, and you, to a family,
Sleep and may your beliefs and zeal persist.
Sleep quietly, Marx and Freud,
The figure-heads of our transition.
Cagney, Lombard, Bing and Garbo,
Sleep in your world of celluloid.
Sleep now also; monk and satyr,
Cease your wrangling for a night.
Sleep, my brain, and sleep, my senses,
Sleep, my hunger and my spite.
Sleep, recruits to the evil army,
Who, for so long misunderstood,
Took to the gun to kill your sorrow;
Sleep and be damned and wake up good.
While we sleep, what shall we dream?
Of Tir nan Og or South Sea islands,

Of a land where all the milk is cream
And all the girls are willing?
Or shall our dream be earnest of the real
Future when we wake,
Design a home, a factory, a fortress
Which, though with effort, we can really make?
What is it we want really?
For what end and how?
If it is something feasible, obtainable,
Let us dream it now,
And pray for a possible land
Not of sleep-walkers, not of angry puppets,
But where both heart and brain can understand
The movements of our fellows;
Where life is a choice of instruments and none
Is debarred his natural music,
Where the waters of life are free of the ice-blockade of hunger
And thought is free as the sun,
Where the altars of sheer power and mere profit
Have fallen to disuse,
Where nobody sees the use
Of buying money and blood at the cost of blood and money,
Where the individual, no longer squandered
In self-assertion, works with the rest, endowed
With the split vision of a juggler and the quick lock of a taxi,
Where the people are more than a crowd.
So sleep in hope of this—but only for a little;
Your hope must wake
While the choice is yours to make,
The mortgage not foreclosed, the offer open.

Sleep serene, avoid the backward
Glance; go forward, dreams, and do not halt
(Behind you in the desert stands a token
Of doubt—a pillar of salt).
Sleep, the past, and wake, the future,
And walk out promptly through the open door;
But you, my coward doubts, may go on sleeping,
You need not wake again—not any more.
The New Year comes with bombs, it is too late
To dose the dead with honourable intentions:
If you have honour to spare, employ it on the living;
The dead are dead as 1938.
Sleep to the noise of running water
To-morrow to be crossed, however deep;
This is no river of the dead or Lethe,
To-night we sleep
On the banks of Rubicon—the die is cast;
There will be time to audit
The accounts later, there will be sunlight later
And the equation will come out at last.